

This Page Is Inserted by IFW Operations
and is not a part of the Official Record

BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images may include (but are not limited to):

- BLACK BORDERS
- TEXT CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES
- FADED TEXT
- ILLEGIBLE TEXT
- SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES
- COLORED PHOTOS
- BLACK OR VERY BLACK AND WHITE DARK PHOTOS
- GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS

IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

**As rescanning documents *will not* correct images,
please do not report the images to the
Image Problem Mailbox.**

REMARKS

Claims 1-25, all the claims pending in the application, are rejected. Applicants have amended claims 1, 2, 17 and 23.

Claim Objections

Claims 1, 2, 10-13, 17-20 and 23-25 are objected to because the Examiner finds that the line spacing is not "normal spacing". This objection is traversed.

The entire text of the application is a word document which uses "line justification", a feature of MS Word that permits whole words to be fit into each line without requiring hyphenation. This is a standard feature on all word processing software and results in text having well defined margins on the left and right sides, and use of entire words on a line while avoiding the use of hyphenation. Line justification is clearly preferred by the USPTO. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is requested.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3, 13-17, 19 and 21-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Sporgis (6,320,495). This rejection is traversed.

The Invention

As explained in the Background of the Invention, games for use with the variety of TV game machines have multiple stages and, in many cases, are so complicated that players require assistance in mastering the final stages. Such players obtained clues from mastery books that have been prepared by the game vendors or others in order to identify ways of conquering a given stage and proceeding to a next one of the multiple stages. Such books are in hard copy text form and are undesirable because of their volume and limited accessibility.

Accordingly, the present invention overcomes these problems by providing programming, and a capability within a master support apparatus, as well as a terminal apparatus used by a player, to make clues efficiently available as soft copy, e.g., by the internet or wireless broadcast. The information may be distributed by the master support apparatus to individual participants on the basis of the current stage being played in a given multi-stage game by the participant. The terminal can transmit information with regard to the current one of the multiple

stages at which the participant is playing. In a related feature, the master support apparatus may maintain a table identifying the highest stage of the multiple stages that have been mastered by a given participant, based upon a unique identifier for that participant. Consequently, appropriate game support information may be transmitted selectively to that participant and displayed on request in order to allow the participant to effectively conquer the current stage.

Additional features regarding the rank of a player may also be implemented based upon distributed ranking information. The progress of a game through multiple stages is illustrated in Fig. 4 and the record of a player in conquering individual stages is illustrated in Fig. 3 with the use of a flag system. Storage of mastery information based upon stages and games at a central station is illustrated in Fig. 6.

Sporgis

The patent to Sporgis is a treasure hunt type game for multiple mobile players, which utilizes a global positioning satellite (GPS) system and a host controller. The GPS system enables participants 15 having mobile terminals 11 to have their position within a geographical area determined and transmitted to a central game master computer program 12 that runs the treasure hunt. The player's GPS receivers 11 receive navigation data from the satellites 13 and determine their locations. The location is transmitted back to the game master by the player's wireless communication devices 14. The game master determines clues to be given to a particular player based upon the player's location and other variables, including the location of other players, the number of clues a player has solves and how many points along a treasure hunt route each player has passed (col. 4, lines 15-25). The game itself is run via access to a central website (col. 3, lines 51-52). The game master 12 transmits clues to the wireless communication devices 14 of each player, which may be simple text, video, music, diagrams, etc. (col. 3, lines 43-47). The players interpret the clues and conduct their travel throughout a geographical area, searching for the ultimate treasure.

The Examiner interprets the teachings in Sporgis, particularly with relation to the use of clues by the game master, as a mastery support apparatus which has a distribution device for distributing master information, or clues.

A basic distinction between Sporgis and the present invention, however, is that the two games, their features and the required function of the participant's equipment is totally different. First, the game in the present invention is played on each separate terminal apparatus. Each participant has access to the software of the entire game and plays the game locally. Second, each game progresses through multiple processor-controlled stages. Third, the support apparatus maintains information as to which stages of the executable game an individual participant or plurality of participants has proceeded.

All of these provide distinctions from the treasure hunt type game of Sporgis, where the game is controlled centrally and not at remote terminals. Moreover, a game with multiple stages is not executed at each terminal. While the Examiner may argue that Sporgis teaches the monitoring of progress of a participant along a route, which the Examiner may assert are individual stages, these are not stages of an executable game, as now claimed. Further, the stages are not executed at each terminal, as in the present invention.

On the basis of this distinction, which is now emphasized by further amendments to claims 1, 2, 17 and 23, the rejection should be overcome. Moreover, the claims would be unobvious over Sporgis alone or in combination with other references cited by the Examiner.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 4-12, 18, 20, 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sporgis in view of Lee (6,475,089). This rejection is traversed.

The deficiencies of Sporgis in anticipating the claimed invention has been demonstrated. Lee does not remedy these deficiencies. Lee concerns a game system as illustrated in Fig. 1 of the patent with a plurality of game devices 2a, 2b, which are connected to a host computer 3. Each game device can issue requests for a game (S101) and receive in return information on an opponent selected by the host (S102). After obtaining opponent information, the game devices are cut off from communication with the host computer and a competition type game is implemented between the game devices 2a and 2b by way of a communication line 5a (S105). Nothing in this system or its corresponding disclosure teaches or suggests the provision of mastery information to individual game devices from a mastery support apparatus on the basis of

the stage at which individual executable multi stage games are being executed at individual terminals.

Indeed, the Examiner cites Lee for an alleged teaching of a determining device that determines the rank of a player with reference to accumulated information and a distribution of ranking information pertaining to a determined rank. The Examiner points to the disclosure in Lee (col. 7, lines 24-26) for a feature of keeping personal information of the players, including the results of previous games. Lee depends upon the results of competition between players being sent back to the host computer 3. However, this is not equivalent to the storage, maintenance and supply of mastery information on a staged bases two players which are executing multi stage games on terminals, particularly information regarding the current stage at which a player is participating.

On the basis of Applicant's clarifying amendments and the foregoing arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections are overcome.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON OFFICE



23373

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan J. Kasper", written over a horizontal line.

Alan J. Kasper
Registration No. 25,426

Date: May 27, 2003

APPENDIX
VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

The claims are amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A game mastery support apparatus which supports mastery of an executable multi-step game, the game mastery support apparatus comprising:

a distribution device which distributes mastery information for mastering a game to a terminal apparatus having a game execution function for executing the executable multi-stage game.

2. (Amended) The game mastery support apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the distribution device distributes the mastery information according to mastery status information, which is obtained from the terminal apparatus and indicates a stage among said multiple stages of the executable multi-stage game to which a player has proceeded.

17. (Amended) A terminal apparatus which receives information distributed by a game mastery support apparatus for supporting mastery of an executable multi stage game, and which has a game execution function, the terminal apparatus comprising:

a display screen; and

a processing section which receives, from the game mastery support apparatus, distributed mastery information for mastering an executable multi-stage game according to the particular stage of multiple stages then being executed, and which displays the mastery information on the display screen.

23. (Amended) A computer readable medium having recorded thereon a processing program for activating a game mastery support apparatus for supporting mastery of an executable multi-stage game, the processing program comprising:

a distributing routine for distributing mastery information for mastering an executable multi-stage game to a terminal apparatus having a game execution function.